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Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded

The Efficiency of ICT Tools in Teaching and Learning Verbal Communication Skills at Undergraduate Students Level from S.R.T.M University, Nanded(India) : A Task-based English Language Study.

A Pre-Synopsis Submitted to

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I. Introduction:

This study is an attempt to investigate the efficiency of using ICT (Information and communication technology) in developing the verbal communication skills of undergraduate learners who are studying English as a foreign language at Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded (SRTM). It proposes some meaningful tasks that suit the level of the learners at SRTM University and the context in which they are placed. It explains that ICT has become essential in everyday classroom teaching and learning because it gives a chance to teachers and learners to increase the quality of education by working collaboratively with authentic and practical sources. This study expects that providing learners with some graded and meaningful technology-based tasks will certainly enhance their verbal fluency.

The study consists of two main phases. The first phase tries to find out how learners use ICT tools in their learning and to have a record of their experiences, attitudes, and the factors that may affect their attitudes toward this use. It also involves identifying the challenges involved in speaking fluently by the undergraduate (UG) English as foreign language (EFL) learners at SRTM University. This will be done with the help of a questionnaire, classroom observations, interviews as well as a narrative inquiry. Based on the findings in the first phase, the second phase concentrates on the importance of teaching some strategies that are important in fluency development. Further, various practical tasks will be suggested to help the learners build up their fluency in English speech. Finally, the study will end with some recommendations for teachers, course designers, and undergraduate EFL learners at SRTM University.

English occupies a very important place in educational and life system of India. Effective communication in English enhances one's life and paves way to succeed both in personal and professional life. A major shift in the status of English is now under way in India. English is going to be used by many people for many purposes than ever before. There are three main drivers in India towards the greater use of English: education (increasing demand of for English-medium schools, widening access to higher education, incorporation of English training in vocational education), employment (many jobs in the organized sector now require good English skills), social mobility (English is seen as an access route to the middle class and geographical mobility within India and beyond. The influence of English has increased over the years since independence. English has been spoken in India from colonial days. However, there's no

credible estimate number of how many Indians actually know English. A survey of wage earners in India, carried out in 2005 found that a third (35%) claimed to be able to read English, but less than half of those (16.5) also claimed to speak English. English is taught compulsory all over the country although the class from which its teaching is started differs from state to another.

English is playing a major role in every field such as medicine, engineering, education, art and law, business etc. Therefore, we should think of how to teach English effectively at our schools. As the world is changing, there must be changes in language teaching and learning. Most of the traditional methods of teaching are not showing great impact on the learners. Thus, there is a great need for an alternative approach that suits the needs of learners and makes them learn effectively.

In recent times, most of schools, colleges and private institutes around the world tend to integrate ICT in their teaching. For example, most lecturers use PowerPoint presentations for their lectures. Some students also make use of their mobile phones to access information quickly and easily. ICT can enhance the quality of education in several ways: by increasing learner motivation and engagement, by facilitating the acquisition of basic skills, and by enhancing teacher training. ICTs are also transformational tools which, when used appropriately, can promote the shift to a learner-centered environment.

This research aims at investigating the present status of oral fluency in academic settings of undergraduate (UG) students at Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded University (SRTM) leading to some important suggestions for teaching verbal fluency with a view to improve the existing situations with the help of some technology- based tasks.

Definitions of Key words:

1. **The Term ICT:**

   The ICT is broader term for information technologies which refers to all Communication Technologies including computers, video conferencing, media applications and services, software, middleware, wireless, networks, cell phones and internet so on and so forth.

   Information and communication technology is one of the useful tools for research work. ICT attempted to enhance the development speed in the whole education system.

It plays a vital role in the teaching and learning process. It improves the teaching and learning process and enhances the transparency of the educational system.

Advantages of ICT in education:

There are many useful benefits of utilizing ICT tools in education such as:

- ICT in education improves engagement and knowledge retention
- ICT promotes higher-order thinking skills.
- ICT enhances soft skills learning
- ICT use encourages learning and teaching
- ICT use motivates collaboration
- ICT use develops literacy and capability.

Therefore the ICT allows students to monitor and manage their learning, think it critically and creatively solves problems, and adopt global aspects towards ideas and issues and decision-making. It is also known as the interactive teaching box and digital research tools.

2. **Task-Based Learning :**

It is an approach to language learning where learners are given interactive tasks to complete. It needs to communicate, that once the task is complete, then the teacher discusses the language used in the Learner's plan and itinerary for guest who is coming to stay with their teacher.

A task-based learning method of a lesson or unit is designed to help learners to complete a task. It gives an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language, introduces authentic text into the learning situation and it provides opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning and teaching process. The role of teachers he /she may ask their students to perform a task that resembles authentic real-life situations. Likewise, it helps students to build more self-confidence to use the target language. It may enhance their language learning motivation in class. Task-Based Language Teaching also known as task-based instruction highlights the use of authentic language to complete meaningful tasks in the target language. The teachers are expected to use meaningful tasks for assessment purposes, to evaluate if students have performed the task to Criterion, and use assessment for formative purposes with a view.

3. **Verbal communication Skills:**

   Verbal communication skills refer to the utilization of words to express ourselves in front of other people. Thus it's an inclusion of both spoken and written communication. Examples of verbal communication skills are, active listening, asking for clarifications, asking open-ended questions to gain insights, recognizing and responding to non-verbal cues, speaking clearly and concisely, being polite.etc.

II. Statement of the Problem and Questions of the Study:

This research has targeted the undergraduate students who are studying English as a foreign language in some of rural and urban colleges at SRTM University. Although the learners are exposed to different aspects of language during their study, they may not be able to speak fluently. Therefore, this study is an attempt to analyze the problems that make these students non-fluent speakers of English and subsequently, various strategies and graded tasks are suggested for improving their fluency. The study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are learners' personal experiences on using ICTs in language learning?
2. What are the types of ICTs that teachers use in their class?
3. What are teachers and learners attitudes towards the using ICT tools? And what factors may influence their attitudes?
4. Is the use of ICT applicable for all the topics in teaching of language skills in general and speaking skills in particular?
5. Do the studied districts have good internet access (connectivity) and regular power supply to facilitate ICT usage in the colleges?
6. What are the common difficulties that learners face during their speaking?
7. What are the strategies they adopt to avoid communication breakdown or to convey their messages successfully?
8. What types of activities do learners need to enhance their verbal communication skills?

III. Objectives of the study:

1. To swot up the attitude toward the use of ICT of both the teachers and learners of Colleges of Education at SRTM University.
2. To assess how much knowledge tutors have in the use of ICT in their lessons.

3. To find out the availability of ICT tools such as number of computers, printers, projectors and above all a computer laboratory in these colleges
4. To explore access to internet connectivity and availability of regular electricity supply in the studied districts.(environmental factors)
5. To find out what and how undergraduate EFL learners use different search engines to examine their experiences of ICTs use in learning English language, and to suggest some pedagogical implications.
6. To analyze the problems that make these students non-fluent speakers of English and subsequently various strategies and graded activities are suggested for improving their fluency.
7. To explore the impact of different factors like, strength of the class, cost of ICT tools, socio -economic background of the learners on the use of ICT in ELT
8. To motivate and stimulate students for self-paced learning by suggesting ways of infusing ICT in English language teaching and learning.
9. Explain the positive and negative dimensions of technology in language learning
10. To examine the factors that may have influence on teachers' and learners attitudes.
11. To evaluate the effectiveness ICT applications compare to conventional methods of English language teaching and to improve communication Skills in English of undergraduate learners of engineering.
12. To explore the extent to which ICT use can impact/imply on teacher trainees in colleges of Education in Nanded.

IV. Literature Review:

According to Abilasha & Ilan kumaran (2018), teaching pattern has to be flexible particularly to the learners of present time. In this article, they have explained how teachers could implement ICT to store, retrieve, manipulate, and transmit or receive information in digital form. They are of the view that the role of the teacher is very important to help practice, develop, and sharpen the students language skills by infusing innovative methodology through technology in their teaching. They have also mentioned that there is a need to implement ICT in every educational institution which helps students and teachers to communicate with one another in a wider range.

Dang Hoang Tri & Nhung Hong Thi Nguyen (2014) in their study explored and examined the students‟ perceptions and expectations on the use of ICT in English language teaching and learning. A Sample of 149 second-year English major students from five classes at Hoa Sen University was used for the study. The findings of the research study highlighted that the majority of the students spent more time employing ICT for general purposes than for language learning purposes. The students also showed strong positive attitudes towards the benefits of technology in English language learning and expected ICT‟s to be used more frequently in English teaching and learning. It also claimed that students expect teachers to instruct them on how to search for information and use them. The study made it clear that the limited use of ICT by the teachers was due to insufficient training in technology and their fear of increasing workloads, as they would have to spend more time on preparing lessons.

K. U. Isisag (2012) indicated that the computers and internet are the most powerful tools used in the teaching of English language. In his study he had established that ICT helped learners to acquire knowledge throughout their life time. He has emphasized that the rapid advancement in ICT opens new opportunities for the teachers to promote quality and effective teaching environment. He has also insisted that the teachers should use ICT in their regular classroom activities as it helps them to create different materials for each lesson.

Abdul Mahmoud Idrees Ibrahim (2010) explains the role of ICT in the teaching of English Language. He states in his article that ICT helps teachers to change their pace of teaching in order to suit the goals of teaching materials which incorporate the needs of the students. He is of the opinion that the developments like language lab, videos, satellite broadcast, web seminars and videoconferencing, support the richness and quality of education both on and off the campus. He has also emphasized that ICT has provided a lot of opportunities for the students as well as the teachers to practice English in and outside the classroom. The study suggests that there is a need for teachers to implement modern technologies in their teaching in order to enhance an effective way of learning environment. He concludes his views by stating that modern technologies facilitate and motivate the teaching and learning process effectively so that there is a need for all the schools and universities to equip the learning environment with computers and internet service which would contribute greatly in the educational development and effective learning in different aspects of teaching and learning.

There are many studies conducted to prove the impact of ICT tools in ELT classes and gave an overview of the role of learners and teachers attitudes toward the integration of these tools. However, most of these studies didn't suggest any practical methods and strategies to change the opinion of teachers and make them professional at implementing the technology in their classes. This study intends to provide pedagogical suggestions as well as technology-based meaningful tasks that will help Undergraduate EFL learners at S.R.T.M University to develop their verbal communication skills.

Many studies prove that tasks can raise the learners' motivation and positively affect their attitudes toward learning. Patricia Carreo (2016) said that, communicative tasks are more practical than traditional lessons. So, they motivate students to speak in English without worrying about accuracy. Torky (2006) also studied the effectiveness of using communicative interactive tasks in developing first-year secondary students' speaking skills in Egypt. She found that tasks can increase students' motivation and positive attitudes towards learning to speak.

V. Research Methodology:

The methods followed for the present research study are a questionnaire, interview, classroom Observation and narrative inquiry. The domain chosen for the research study is Swami Ramnand Teerth Marthwada University, Nanded. It covers some colleges in the university in different divisions of the city. The collection of data is done through:

1. A structured questionnaire: that was supposed to be answered by the teachers of English in these colleges. The data collected helped the researcher to get an idea of the number of users of ICT tools, sources which the teachers integrate in their teaching, the topics to which the application of ICT suits. It will also show the factors that may affect the teachers' attitudes toward the use of ICT.
2. An interview: A group of learners chosen randomly from different colleges will be interviewed. Interviews enable face to face discussion with the participants and help the researcher to get more reliable data. All the interviews will be recorded on phone for accuracy.
3. Observations: After getting permission to access classes of undergraduate EFL learners at SRTM University, the researcher will observe various classes to evaluate the teachers' use of ICT in their teaching and to notice how learners reflect to this approach.

4. A narrative enquiry: This is one of the most important tools in this study. Narrative inquiry is accounted as both phenomenon and a method where people tell their stories. The storytellers explain such past experiences and the researchers collect their stories and writes narratives of them. Narrative research is now used in studies of education. Teachers and learners are the main touchstone in education and they are the storytellers in their own and other's stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

   Based on the interpretations of the obtained results, various graded and meaningful tasks will be designed and some strategies are suggested for developing fluency in speaking.

VI. Hypotheses of the Study

In the age of technology, ICT plays a crucial role in the educational field. Children from the youngest group to adolescents enjoy working on computers, chatting and messaging on cell phones. The study is based on the hypothesis that the use of ICT can help the undergraduate EFL learners at SRTM University, Nanded to improve their verbal communication skills.

VII. Significance of the Study

As this study aims to explore the students' perceived importance and experiences of using ICTs and provides the information about what and how M.Ed. semester students' use ICTs in the process of English language learning, it would be beneficial in many ways. Firstly, this study would be significant to those EFL teachers and students who are interested in English language teaching and learning through ICTs as it would assist them to know the real experiences and importance of ICTs uses in academic contexts. Secondly, the study will further deepen the ICT Policy's aims and objectives and enhance its implementation. In other words, it will improve policy on ICT and help stakeholders make better and updated decisions.

Since the literature lacks broad empirical studies investigating students' and teachers' attitudes towards The use of ICT in language instruction, this study includes gathering the opinions of students and teachers, exploring its actual use of ICTS in the classroom, and providing pedagogical advice for effective use of this technology. The study ends up with various technology – based tasks that can help EFL learners to make the best use of ICT.

This research would be equally fruitful for those who want to study further in this field in future. In addition to this, this study would be helpful to identify needs, practices and pedagogical implementations of ICT in ELT classrooms.

VIII. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study aims at investigating the present status of verbal communication skills in academic of undergraduate (UG) students at Swami Ramanand Teerth Marthwada University (S.R.T.M) leading to some important suggestions for teaching verbal communicatin with a view to improve the existing situations with the help of atask- based English language teaching approach. It is expected that this research would be useful for the scholars, teachers and course designers/ material producers of English in India.

This study has targeted the undergraduate students who are studying English as a compulsory subject in various colleges at S.R.T.M University. However, looking at the great number of colleges in the university, it will be very difficult to go to all of them. This is basically due to distance, time and financial constraints. Moreover, useful technology-based tasks are to be designed on the basis of the findings of this study but all these tasks focus only on specific group of learners (i.e. Undergraduate English learners at S.R.T.M University)

IX. Sources of the Study

1. **Primary Sources:**

   The data from primary sources are to be collected through a questionnaire, interview, classroom observation as well as narrative inquiry.

2. **Secondary Sources:**

   They include various books, thesis, research papers as well as articles that are extremely related to the research topic. For example, Changing language education through CALL by Donaldson, R. P., & Haggstrom (2006) , Routledge, The world development report (WDR) 2018, Vijayalakshmi, M., & Babu, M. S. (2014). A brief history of English language teaching in India. *International Journal of scientific and research Publications*, *4*(5), 1-4..etc.

X. Tentative Plan of the Study

1. **Chapter one:**

   It forms the introduction of the study highlighting the aim and scope and also stating the method adopted in this research. It concludes with an outline of the present study.

2. **Chapter two:**

   This chapter reviews the research carried out so far in the area of fluency development. This is done with the purpose of placing the present study in the map of ongoing research in the field of teaching oral communication.

3. **Chapter three:**

   It discusses the research design of the study. The relevance of the present study is focused and the subjects of the study, tools and methodology adopted for data collection are enumerated. The aim of this chapter is to give detailed facts about the data collected through the methods of the study.

4. **Chapter four:**

   This chapter sets out the strategies which are significant in developing verbal communication skills.

5. **Chapter five:**

   The chapter is the core of this research. It consists of the definitions and characteristics of a task in a communicative environment, components of a task, kinds of task and significance of planning a task during its implementation. Further, the importance of grading the task has also been emphasized which is followed by designing meaningful educational tasks for various levels.

6. **Chapter six:**

   It concludes the thesis and summarizes the findings of this study.

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